A Qualitative Exploration into Australian Muslims Emerging into Adulthood

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Abstract : While the scrutinization towards marginalized groups throughout the globe has been existent for decades, prejudice towards Muslims in Western countries has been increasing dramatically. The vicious attacks across the globe by perpetrators who identify with Islam as well as popular political discourse by politicians in Western countries claiming and portraying Muslims as being dangerous, oppressed, or lacking the ability to assimilate into the community, adds to the exclusion and lack of belonging Muslims living in Western countries experience. The early stages of adulthood which have recently been conceptualized as emerging adulthood is a critical and socially ambiguous transition. For a young Muslim emerging into adulthood in a Western country, a variety of different challenges and demands that can exceed their coping abilities can arise. While in search for their identity and in a bid to structure themselves with their past childhood experiences together with their newly forming values, the emerging adult may attempt to direct or change the way in which they are viewed by others. This can be done to gain approval from others and to feel a sense of belonging. A change in the emerging adult's interpersonal interactions and relationships, the way in which they view themselves and others, their sense of belonging, and their identity, also occurs during this developmental stage. To explore the manner in which Muslims emerging into adulthood carve their identity, their experiences, and representation of their Muslim identity, social identification, and their sense of belonging in Australia, an interpretative phenomenological methodology was utilized. This allowed participants to offer their own subjective experiences. A total of eight emerging adults took part in the study whilst four adults who work with emerging adults took part. Adult participants who work with emerging adults took part in the study to bring forth their insight and experiences. Common experiences were organized into themes. Themes included identifying as a Muslim, social identification, and belonging. Identification included visual identification and name, discrimination and resilience. Findings clearly indicated that Muslims emerging into adulthood in Australia do face various hurdles while they try to retain and represent their religious identity. Despite the unique challenges that they face, they still feel a sense of belonging and identity as being Australian.

Keywords : Muslim, Islam, emerging adulthood, Australia

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